

Living in COVID Times - IDF Europe COVID & Diabetes Survey

Experiences from People living with Diabetes



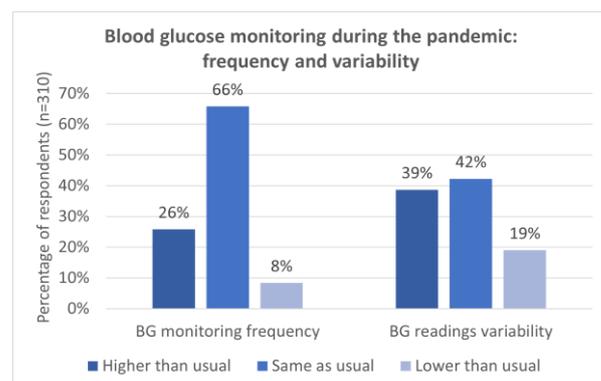
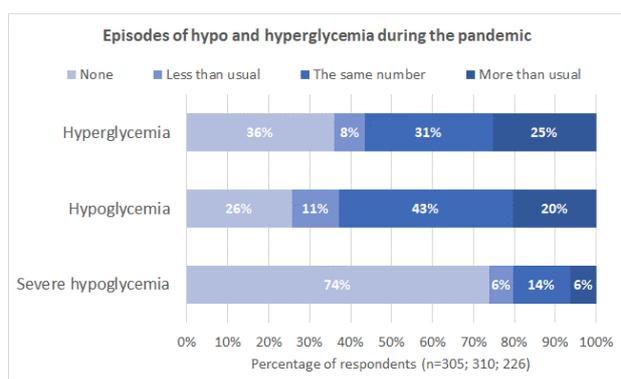
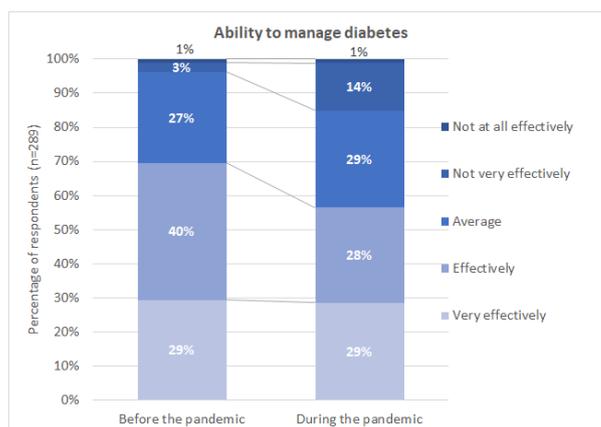
Ireland

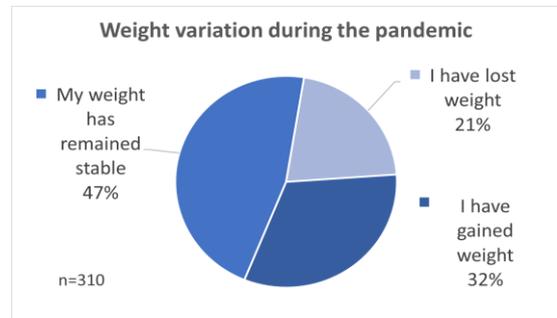
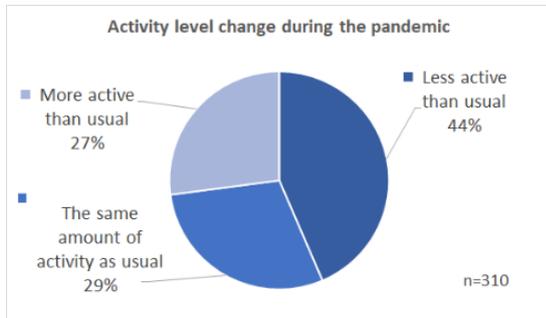
Summary

In Ireland, the COVID-19 pandemic did not significantly disrupt access to medicines, supplies, and technologies for people living with diabetes (PwD). By contrast, it had a significant impact on PwD's ability to access care, with many appointments cancelled, rescheduled or replaced with remote consultations. Overall, just over one in ten PwD found it difficult to manage their diabetes well during the crisis, a figure which was up sharply compared to pre COVID-19. As in many countries, a significant issue for PwD was the lack of guidance: 48% of respondents did not receive any from their healthcare team and 76% mentioned that more information and clearer (more specific) recommendations for PwD would have helped them manage their diabetes better. One third would also have liked more online support. While government sources were used by a large majority of PwD for guidance, more than one third of respondents also made use of the information provided by their diabetes association. COVID-19 had a significant psychological impact on PwD. One quarter of the respondents worried about shortages of medicines and supplies, 55% felt very or extremely anxious and 65% experienced more frequent episodes of low mood. The Irish healthcare system adapted to the constraints resulting from the pandemic with the deployment of remote consultations. Most PwD appeared satisfied with the virtual consultation they attended and overall, a large majority felt ready to use them in the future, either exclusively or as part of a mix of options.

Diabetes Management

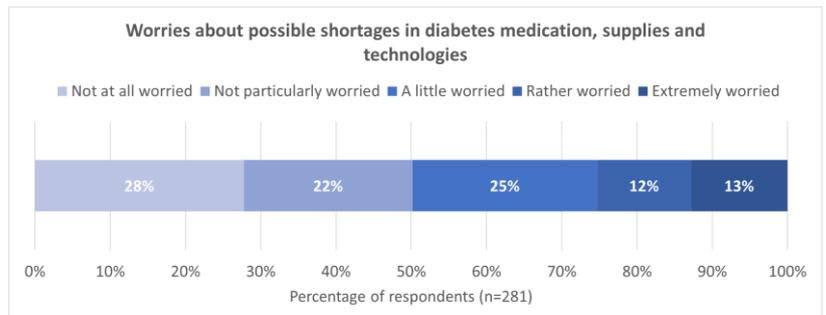
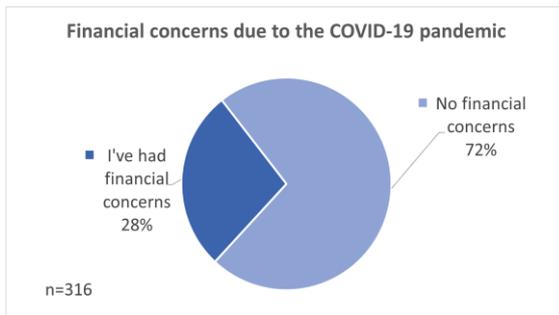
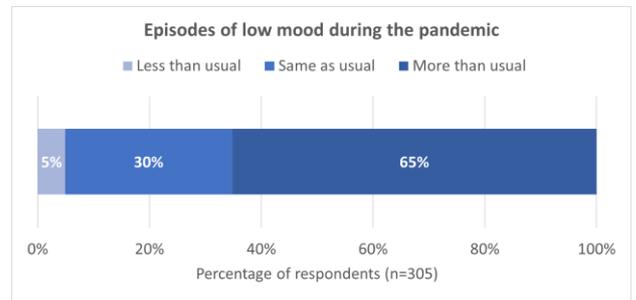
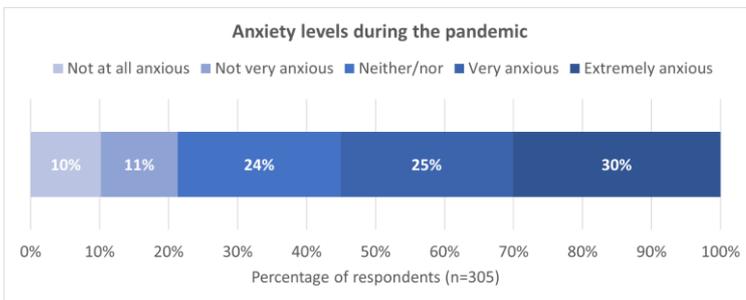
The proportion of respondents who rated their ability to manage their diabetes as ineffective or very ineffective rose from 4% pre-pandemic to 15% during COVID-19. Close to 60% still reported managing well, but this figure was down from 70% pre-COVID, while 91% were able to follow their diabetes regimen at least as well as usual. Thirty-nine percent of respondents reported more variable blood glucose readings than usual. A number of PwD reported a higher frequency of hyperglycaemic and hypoglycaemic episodes. The situation regarding weight management and physical activity was contrasted, although overall more people reported putting on weight, and engaging less in physical activity than the opposite.



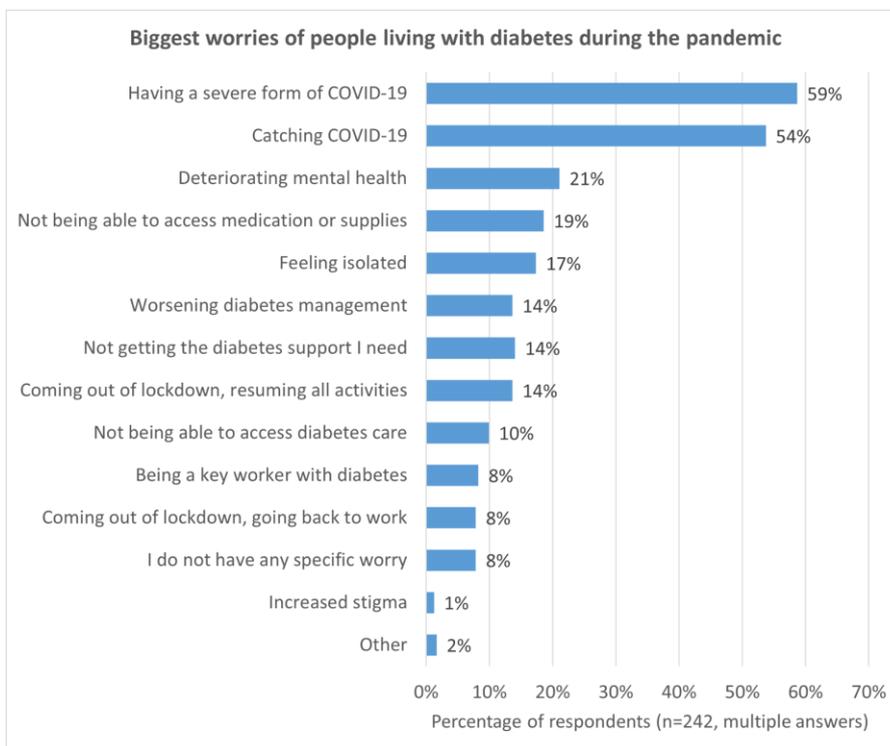


Psychological Impact

A marked effect of the pandemic related to PwD's psychological well-being. Over half the respondents felt more or much more anxious during the pandemic and 65% experienced more episodes of low mood than usual. Fifty-nine percent were afraid of developing a serious form of COVID-19. Financial concerns were reported by over a quarter of PwD, a much higher level than in many other Western European countries, and broadly on a par with the situation in Spain and Italy. While few experienced difficulties in accessing medicines, supplies and technologies, one in four were worried about possible shortages.

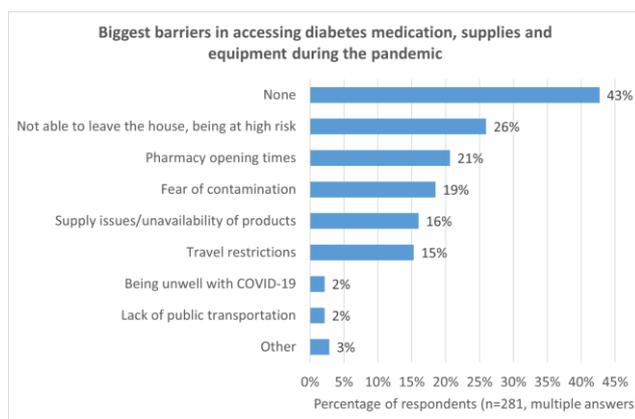
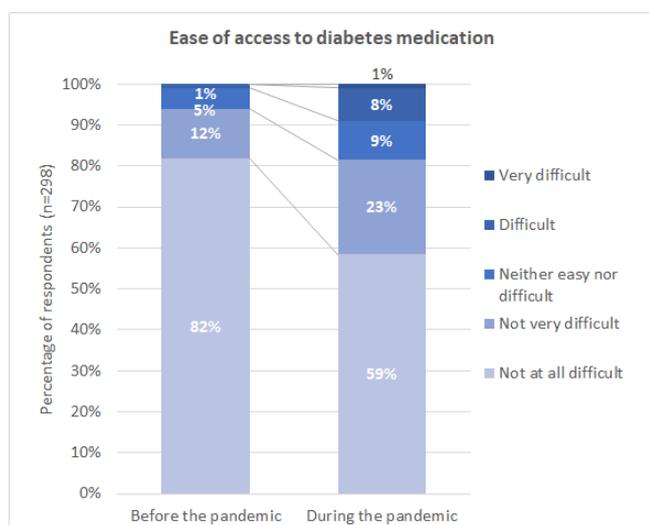


Developing a severe form of COVID/Catching COVID were major worries during the pandemic, ahead of deteriorating mental health.

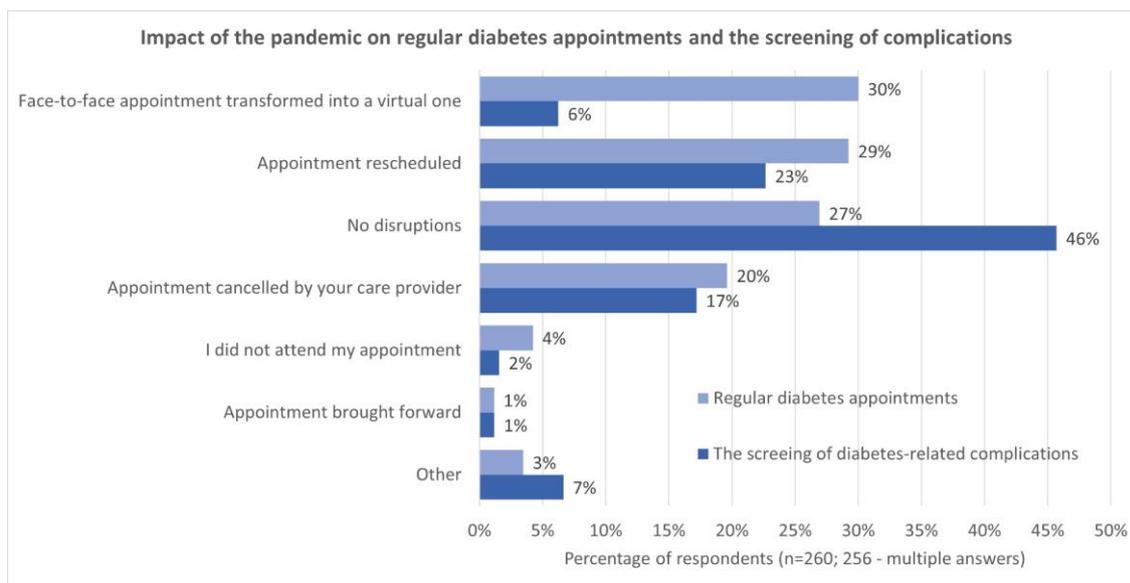


Access to Medicines, Supplies, Technologies, and Care

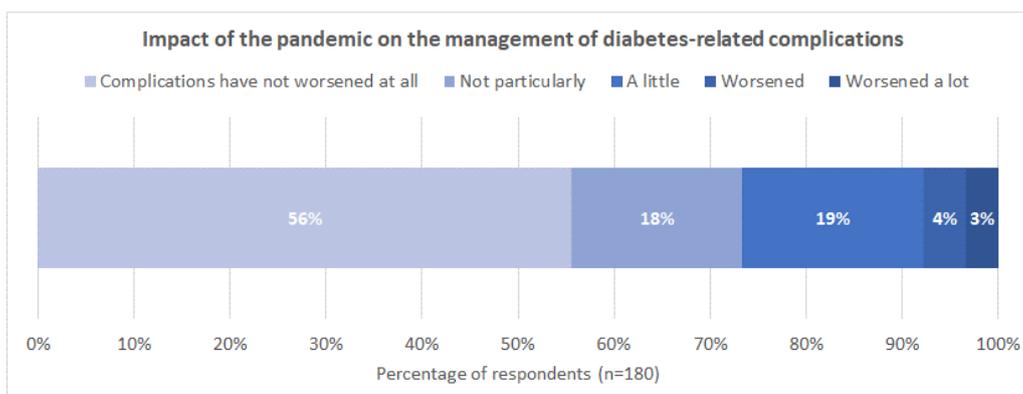
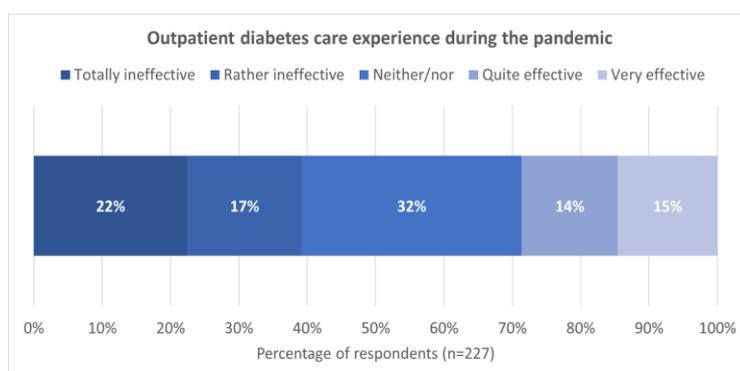
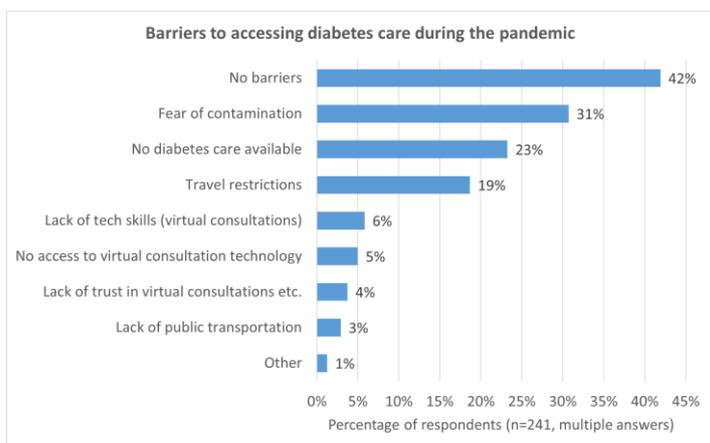
A relatively small but non-negligible 9% of respondents reported difficulties in accessing medication. A similar proportion reported challenges in accessing diabetes supplies or equipment. Both tended to be linked people's inability to leave the house and/or fear of contamination.



There was some disruption in access to care, with fear of COVID-19 contamination the most frequently cited barrier. About one third of respondents reported that their appointment for regular diabetes care was rescheduled and 41% reported appointments having been delayed by more than three months.

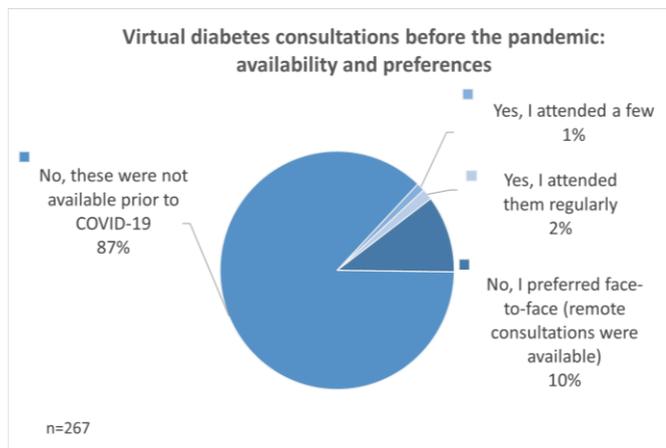
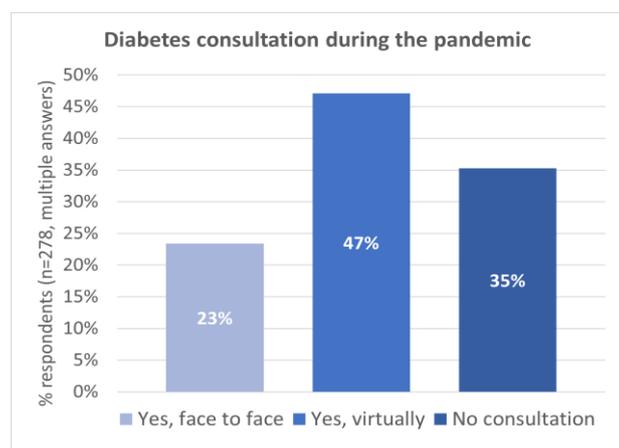


Some 40% of respondents felt that their outpatient diabetes care during the pandemic was rather or totally ineffective and more than a quarter reported a worsening of their complications.

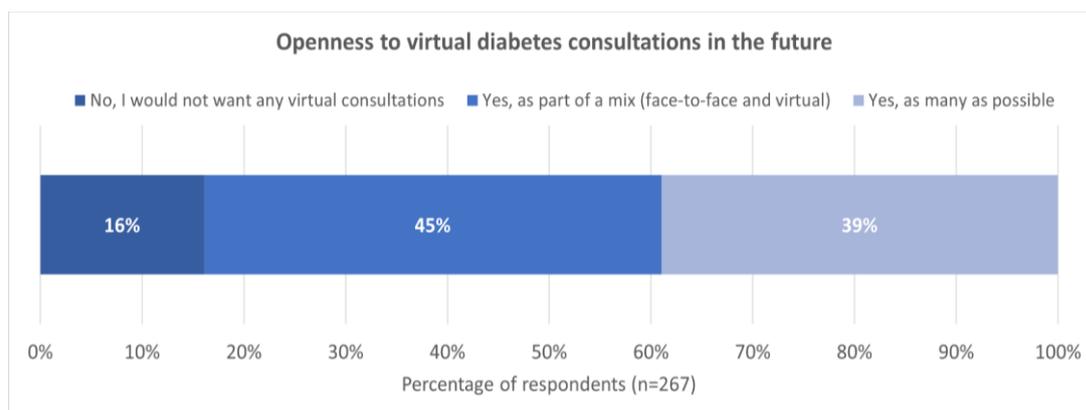
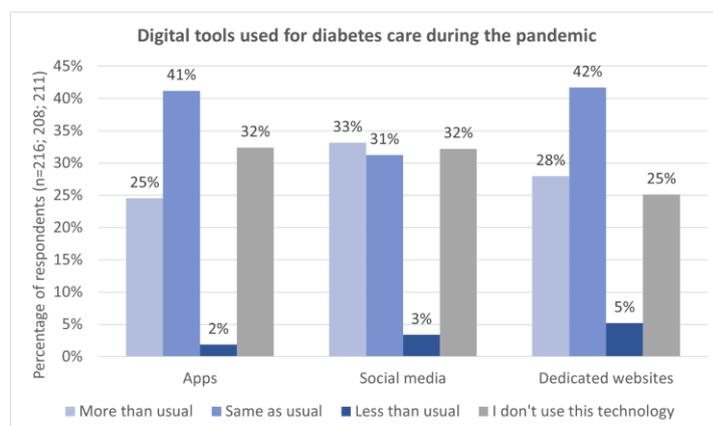
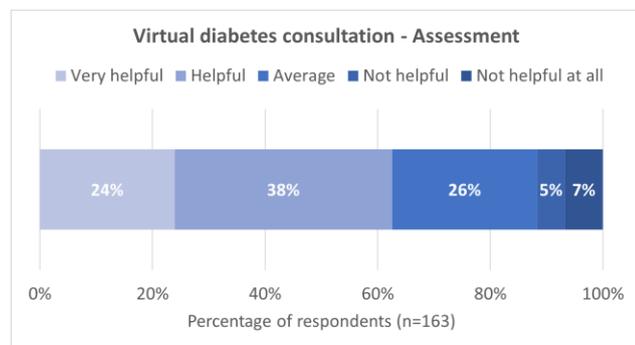


E-health

During the pandemic, close to half the PwD attended virtual consultations and just under a quarter had consultations face to face. This compared with just 3% attending remote consultations prior to the pandemic. These remote consultations took place most of the time over the phone (86% of respondents).



Of those who did attend remote consultations, the majority found them helpful and just 13% did not. Overall, 84% of respondents were open to remote consultations, in many cases with a preference for a mix of face-to-face and remote appointments in the future. Usage of apps, social media platforms and dedicated websites increased significantly during the pandemic in the context of diabetes management.



Background

This country profile was developed as part of 'Living in COVID times', an online survey conducted by IDF Europe between August and October 2020. It collected answers from 3,480 people living with diabetes across 32 countries in Europe and aimed to understand how the COVID-19 crisis affected PwD's lives and their diabetes care. In Ireland, 333 people responded to the survey. Some were parents or caregivers for PwD, but most of them lived with diabetes (68% with type 1 diabetes). Some 65% were women. A majority of respondents were between the ages of 31 and 70. The time respondents had been living with diabetes spanned a wide range and reflected a variety of situations.

The Europe-wide report "Living in COVID times" can be found [here](#).

If you wish to share a testimonial of your life with diabetes in Ireland during the pandemic, write to idfeurope@idf-europe.org. We look forward to hearing from you!



**International
Diabetes Federation**
Europe